



## A Post Tenebras Lux Sunday Sermon...

### For the Sake of Another...

### 2 Samuel 9:1-10

Ulysses S. Grant had throat cancer and knew he was dying. He had been President of the United States for two terms but things had not gone well since leaving office. He had contracted throat cancer, of course, but beyond that a series of bad investments had pushed Grant to the very edge of bankruptcy. In those days, ex-presidents did not receive a pension like they do today. Instead they had to live on whatever money they had already made or could make after leaving office. But Grant had lost all his money. The businesses he had invested in had been managed badly and everything...everything he had invested had been lost. He was pilloried in the press for his bad judgment; there had even been charges of embezzlement and scandal.

Ulysses S. Grant, a proud man, was humiliated by the charges...but he knew he was dying and he knew he no longer had enough time left to worry about luxuries like pride or image. Grant knew if he did nothing his poor wife Julia would wind up a pauper and the thought of his wife being turned out onto the street was a hateful thing to U.S. Grant. He decided he would do whatever he could to provide for his wife; Grant, a deeply private man, decided to write his memoirs.

When the major book publishers found out Grant was willing to write his memoirs, they were ecstatic. He was still a national hero, a popular ex-president. They were chiefly interested in Grant's Memoirs, of course, because they saw an opportunity to make a lot of money...even if it meant taking advantage of a dying man. They wanted to publish Grant but they wanted to pay him on the cheap. They knew Grant was desperate and they wanted to take advantage.

Finally, offended by the greed and callousness of the interested publishers, Grant's friend Mark Twain stepped in and offered to publish Grant's Memoirs himself. He offered to pay Grant more than three times the going rate. Grant accepted and for the next two years sat on his front porch slowly wasting away, bravely enduring excruciating pain while he hammered out what turned out to be an absolutely exquisite book. Grant died two weeks after he finished the manuscript. When he died he weighed less than a hundred and twenty pounds.

A few months later, Twain proudly presented to Julia Grant a check for over two hundred thousand dollars, at that time the largest royalty ever paid by any publisher to any writer anywhere. In the end, he wound up paying Julia Grant somewhere around four hundred and fifty thousand dollars, more than enough money to provide for her needs for the rest of her life.

Mark Twain had come through. He did what he did for the sake of his Yankee friend. He did what he did for the sake of another. Now all of that is historical fact and it is a lovely story. But there is another part of the story that almost no one knows. When Twain paid Julia Grant he did so with his own money. The small publishing house he had decided to use to publish Grant's work had been tottering on the verge of bankruptcy itself for a long time. By the time Twain

needed to pay Julia Grant, it no longer had the money that was required. So Twain sold off all his own assets and funded the whole thing himself. He delivered the widow of U.S. Grant from her poverty but in doing so he drove himself into bankruptcy. Twain had to spend the next 15 years of his life on the stump circuit giving lectures to recover the money he had lost. But Twain was undaunted. His decision cost him his money, his comfort and his health but he never looked back. He did what he had promised he would do...he did so to his own hurt.

He did what he did for the sake of another.

I love that story. I love it for the humanity of the thing and I wanted to tell it to you because it runs so parallel to the story in our text this morning. Let me show you what I mean by inviting you to look with me at 2 Samuel 9, starting in verse one.

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Samuel 9:1**...David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

Now there are three characters mentioned in the text and no doubt you know them all well enough. But in case you are new to the Bible or just don't remember their stories, let me introduce them to you.

David was, of course, King David, the legendary King of Israel, the author of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, the apple of God's eye. He was king who, when he was just a shepherd boy, had proved himself against the ruthless, seemingly invincible

giant Goliath. He was a warrior; he was king; he was poet and he was beloved by the people of Israel as their great champion and national hero.

No doubt you recognize the name of Saul as well. He had been the king right before David. He was a tall, ruggedly handsome man. The people had demanded a king from God and had chosen a king who looked like a king. He had started off pretty well but as his reign extended his vanity and pride caused him to become more and more rebellious against God. Finally, God acted in judgment and took his kingship away. He didn't remove Saul immediately but he took away His hand and blessing from Saul. The effect of which reduced Saul to not much more than a shell of a man... a man who skulked around, ranting and raving in jealous fits against David whom he knew God intended to replace him.

Finally, there was Jonathan. I think he was one of the most remarkable men in the whole of the Old Testament. He was a fierce warrior. He was brave and handsome and faithful. He wasn't afraid of anything. I think he was in every way David's equal and he was David's best and most loyal friend. But...he was the son of Saul...the king God had rejected.

**Now if you read the story of David, Saul and Jonathan that lead up to the chapter we are looking at this morning, you will find it to be a riveting story. Jonathan, Saul's son, loved David and did everything he could to preserve his life. He protected David from the murderous threats of his father. More than once he warned David just in time to save David out of his father's hands and he did so to his own hurt. You see Jonathan knew that God had rejected his father. He knew that David would be king but he also knew as Saul's oldest**

son that he was in the way. Normally, the oldest son replaced his father as king when he died. But Jonathan knew that was not going to happen. He knew that in all likelihood he would be swept away with father in judgment. And here is the amazing thing. Jonathan did not care...because he loved David and wanted to see David exalted even to his own hurt.

Earlier 1 Samuel 20, there is the recorded story of one of Jonathan's last meetings with his friend David. Listen for a moment...as I read the words of Jonathan to his friend David.

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Samuel 20:13**...But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. <sup>14</sup> But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, <sup>15</sup> and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family-- not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."

Now I want you to think about the requests Jonathan made. One is directed to God and two are directed to David. In his first request, he asks God to be with David as He had been with his father. His second request is directed to David and essentially is this, **"If I should survive this civil war that is about to occur will you not show me the kindness of God that I might live?"** His last request, the one I think he really expected to have granted, is given in verse 15. It goes something like this, **"If I should die would you not show me kindness by sparing my children and their descendents?"**

It is an extraordinary scene. Of course between that verse and the one we are looking at this morning in 2 Samuel 9, Saul and Jonathan had both been swept away not by David but by the enemies of the people of God. But even after that

there had been a civil war in Israel in which some of Saul's sons struggled against David for the throne of the nation.

But here in 2 Samuel 9 all that was finished. The nation was at peace; David was firmly seated on the throne of the nation, all his enemies had been routed and as he thought upon the kindness of God, his thoughts turned to his beloved friend Jonathan and he asked..."**Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?**"

David looked around and wondered if there was anybody left, anyone who had not been consumed in the war. So he called for one of Saul's servants to find out.

Verse 2 tells us...

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Samuel 9:2**...Now there was a servant of Saul's household named Ziba. They called him to appear before David, and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" "Your servant," he replied.

Now you ought to notice the shrewdness of Ziba's answer to David. He did not answer, "**I am Ziba.**" He certainly did not answer, "**I am Ziba, Saul's servants.**" Instead he answered, "**I am your servant.**" I think Ziba was trying to get the measure of which way the wind was blowing. I also think David realized that and attempted to set his mind at ease. In verse 3 David asked...

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Samuel 9:3**...The king asked, "Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?" Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet."

Notice that phrase...**"to whom I may show the kindness of God."** You will remember I hope what Jonathan's request had been to David. Jonathan had asked, **"Will you not show me the kindness of God that I might live?"**...and he had asked, **"If I should die would you not show me kindness by sparing my children and their descendants?"** It is that kindness that David wants to extend and he must have convinced Ziba for in the last half of verse three Ziba answered: **"There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet."**

I have often wondered if Ziba threw in that last part just to help David see that Jonathan's son was no threat to him. He was not going to run away and he was not able to fight. Perhaps Ziba misunderstood still the nature of David's desire.

But how David's heart must have soared. How thrilled he must have been. Jonathan, his beloved friend had a son to whom he could show his affection and his kindness. David longed to make good his covenant with Jonathan and now he would be able to do it at last. David called for Jonathan's son to be brought to him.

Verse 4 reads...

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Samuel 9:4**... "Where is he?" the king asked. Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar." <sup>5</sup> So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel.

I can picture in my mind King David pacing about with excitement longing to see the face of the son of his dear friend. But I can also picture in my mind the troubled countenance of Jonathan's son as he made his way in the company of armed soldiers to the king's palace. You see what David was about to do was

unheard of in the ancient eastern world. In those days, kings did not spare the descendants of their enemies. It was a matter of survival. As long as the descendant of a rival king lived there was always the chance of betrayal...of rebellion...of treason. David knew that and so did everyone else but when David heard the son of his beloved friend Jonathan was still alive he stopped thinking in terms of political expediency. You see what he was about to do he was about to do for the sake of another.

Verse 6 reads...

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Samuel 9:6**...When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "Your servant," he replied.

You ought to notice, I think, the similarity of Mephibosheth's answer to that of Ziba. It is not, **"Yes, I am Mephibosheth."** It is certainly not, **"I am Mephibosheth, the grandson of your enemy Saul."** It is simply, **"Here is your servant."**

How he must have trembled with fear but it was a fear that David quickly turned to joy. Listen to David in verse 7...

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Samuel 9:7**..."Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table."

Notice what David is promising.

He is promising God's kindness to Mephibosheth because of Mephibosheth's father Jonathan. He is promising to restore to him the land and the fortune he would have gotten if he himself had become king. He is promising Mephibosheth, not kingship, but all of the privileges and honors attached to being the king's own son and he is doing that not because of anything Mephibosheth had to offer or could do but rather because of his abiding affection for Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan. He is doing what he is doing for the sake of another.

Mephibosheth stood dazed by David's kindness. You can see that in verse 8, by his stunned reply.

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Samuel 9:8**...Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?"

Now we lose something of the dramatic effect of Mephibosheth's reply to King David because when we read his response we tend to think of modern, American dogs. We think of someone's terrier or cocker spaniel or poodle. But in the ancient world, dogs were not man's best friends. They were pests, dirty, mangy scavengers. The ancient Jews viewed them with contempt. They were tolerated in times of plenty and they were eaten in times of famine. They were like the dogs I saw in Africa, dogs which are neither petted nor fed. They cower around living on the very edge of survival. That is the way Mephibosheth viewed his prospects. You see, Mephibosheth was not just surprised; he was astonished by David's kindness to him. But notice David did not answer Mephibosheth at all. Instead he turned to Ziba and said...

**NIV 2 Samuel 9:9**...Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. <sup>10</sup> You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table."

You see what David did was not for the sake of Mephibosheth; it certainly was not for the sake of Saul. It was for the sake of his beloved friend with whom he had covenanted to give the desires of his heart. What David did, he did for the sake of Jonathan. What David did, he did for the sake of another.

Recently, I have been reading, *April 1865: The Month that Saved America*. This scene reminds me of the story in the book taken from the last week of the life of Abraham Lincoln. When Richmond, Virginia, the capital of the Confederacy fell, Lincoln went up to see the city, which lay in almost total ruin. Lincoln made his way to the Confederate White House and walked up the steps and went in the door. He had wanted to sit at Jefferson Davis' old desk. He looked through Davis' papers and sat there a long time. Finally, he got up and started back down to the boat. Along the way he stopped at a house that he knew belonged to General George Pickett. Pickett had been Lincoln's friend before the war and Lincoln had heard that Mrs. Pickett had had a baby. You may remember Pickett as the Confederate General that led the disastrous charge at Gettysburg. Anyway, Lincoln stopped at the house and knocked on the door. Mrs. Pickett opened the door and found herself looking up into the melancholy gray eyes of the President of the United States.

**"Mrs. Pickett,"** Lincoln asked, **"I was in the neighborhood and thought I might pay my respects?"**

**“Of course, Mr. President, won’t you come in?”**

Lincoln went in and sat down. They chatted for a little while and eventually Lincoln asked about the baby who was in another room. Mrs. Pickett asked, **“Would you like to see him, Mr. President?”** Lincoln nodded. Mrs. Pickett went and brought the baby out and placed it in the arms of her sworn enemy. Lincoln played with the baby’s fingers and listened intently to the little baby sounds seemingly made just for his benefit. Finally, Lincoln leaned down with his face very close to the baby and whispered to the astonishment of Mrs. Pickett, **“You can tell you papa I will pardon him, if he wants it, for the sake of your mother’s bright eyes and especially for your good manners.”**

Now, brothers and sisters, here is what I want you to see. Here is what I want you to feel welling up in the recesses of your soul. We are what we are not because of anything we have done. We are what we are because of the atoning work Christ on our behalf. When God looks down from heaven He approves of us not on the basis of any good works we have done. No, He approves us on the basis of the righteous works of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of our unrighteous, all of our inherent unloveliness is covered over by the imputed righteousness of Christ. You see God Himself has stormed the bulwarks of our own sinful unregenerate hearts. He has laid siege to our rebellious minds and has taken them captive so that we no longer see Him as our dreaded enemy. Instead, we see Him as our Father, offering not a sword but offering peace, and forgiveness and hope. And we receive it with trembling hands and grateful hearts. We receive this gift of life from God through the work of Christ applied to our souls by the Holy Spirit. And we know that He has done what He has done not for our

sake but rather for the sake of our great Champion and Redeemer. He has done what he has done for us for the sake of another.

Let us rejoice and be glad.